

## Message Text

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ORIGIN ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 AF-08 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 NEA-10

IO-13 VO-03 SCA-01 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /105 R

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IO :DRTOUSSAINT

EA/VLC:JROSENTHAL

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EA/RA:RMARTENS

EA:OARMSTRONG

D/HA:JMWILSON

S/S - PSHANKLE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BERN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY MANILA IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE  
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 217215

ROME FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, VS

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES -- BOAT CASES

1. SUMMARY: COUNTRIES ON PERIPHERY OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ARE INCREASINGLY UNRECEPTIVE TO REFUGEES ESCAPING BY BOAT, AND FEW PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE. BOATS ARE BEING TURNED AWAY, AND LIVES ARE ENDANGERED AS THE PRACTICE INCREASES. AMBASSADOR REQUESTED TO ASK SEC GEN WALDHEIM TO INTERVENE PERSONALLY IN SUPPORT OF UNHCR APPEAL ON BEHALF OF THOSE REFUGEES. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, AND INCREASINGLY DURING THE SUMMER, HUNDREDS OF VIETNAMESE HAVE ESCAPED THE RIGORS OF THE NEW REGIME BY FLEEING IN SMALL BOATS HEADED TOWARDS WHAT THEY HOPE WILL BE AT LEAST TEMPORARY SAFE-HAVEN IN COUNTRIES ON THE LITTORAL OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. UPWARDS OF 1,500 PEOPLE HAVE MADE DARING AND PERILOUS FLIGHTS THIS YEAR, OFTEN IN UNSEAWORTHY CRAFT THAT COULD ONLY WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY REACH A PORT. INDEED, WE BELIEVE MANY HAVE BEEN LOST AT SEA. OTHERS CAPSIZED AT SEA BUT THE SURVIVORS WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE PICKED UP  
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BY COMMERCIAL VESSELS WHO SIGHTED THEM AND SUBSEQUENTLY BROUGHT THEM TO A PORT. WITH DISTRESSING FREQUENCY IN

THE PAST FEW WEEKS, HOWEVER, COUNTRIES AND PORTS OF FIRST CALL HAVE TURNED AWAY THESE DESPERATE REFUGEES, OR HAVE AT MOST ALLOWED THE BOATS TO REMAIN NEAR THE SHORE WITH THE REFUGEES KEPT ON BOARD WITH ONLY MINIMAL ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO THEM. ALL THE REFUGEES, BUT ESPECIALLY THE

OLD, THE SICK, CHILDREN, AND PREGNANT WOMEN HAVE THUS SUFFERED GREAT HARDSHIPS FIRST FROM THE SEA VOYAGE AND THEN FROM FRUSTRATION AND FEAR CREATED BY THEIR REJECTION JUST WHEN THE PERILS OF THIS TRIP ENDED. ADDITIONALLY, AS THE COUNTRIES IN SEA BECOME INCREASINGLY INHOSPITABLE, SHIPS ARE PASSING BY REFUGEE CRAFT IN DISTRESS WITH EVER GREATER FREQUENCY WITHOUT RENDERING ASSISTANCE.

3. ON JULY 28, THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES ISSUED A "NOTE ON PERSONS LEAVING THE INDOCHINESE PENINSULA ON SMALL BOATS". THIS APPEAL WAS DIRECTED JOINTLY TO COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM AND COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION. THE FORMER -- INDONESIA, THAILAND, SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES, AND (THROUGH THE UK) HONG KONG-- WERE URGED TO GIVE TEMPORARY SHELTER TO SUCH REFUGEES. THE LATTER -- INITIAL ADDRESSEES WERE AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BRAZIL, CANADA, COLOMBIA, DENMARK, FRANCE, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, GREECE, IRAN, ITALY, NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, TURKEY, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, VENEZUELA AND NEW ZEALAND-- WERE ASKED TO PROVIDE PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

4. OUR POSTS IN SEA COUNTRIES HAVE MADE VIGOROUS EFFORTS TO PERSUADE HOST GOVERNMENTS TO ALLOW THE REFUGEES ASHORE, AND WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE APPEAL OF THE UNHCR IN THIS RESPECT BY PLEDGING COOPERATION IN PROVIDING PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT FOR THOSE REFUGEES WHO COULD QUALIFY UNDER OUR PAROLE PROGRAM FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. (FROM MAY TO THIS DATE WE HAVE ALREADY APPROVED MORE THAN 800 BOAT CASE REFUGEES FOR ENTRY INTO THE U.S. AND OF THAT NUMBER 300 HAVE ARRIVED HERE.) BUT OUR LIMITS IN THAT PROGRAM (11,000, TO BRING THE TOTAL IN THE U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM INDOCHINA SINCE APRIL 15, 1975 TO 145,000) HAVE NEARLY BEEN REACHED, AND ONLY IF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO THIS PROBLEM IN A POSITIVE, HUMANE WAY WILL TRAGEDY BE AVERTED.

5. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE RESPONSE TO THE UNHCR NOTE TO DATE AND THE SITUATION IN SEA HAS RAPIDLY GROWN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL. MALAYSIA,

HITHERTO REASONABLY RECEPTIVE TO BOAT CASES, ORDERED A BOAT WITH 93 REFUGEES FORCED BACK TO SEA, AND WAS ONLY INDUCED AT THE LAST MOMENT TO DELAY IMPLEMENTATION. ON AUGUST 26 INDONESIA FORCED A SMALL, CLEARLY UNSEAWORTHY BOAT TO RESUME ITS VOYAGE, DESPITE THE MANIFEST THREAT TO LIVES. THIS VESSEL SANK AND THE REFUGEES WERE

RESCUED BY A FREIGHTER BOUND FOR SINGAPORE, A PORT WHICH HAS REFUSED SAFEHAVEN TO REFUGEES. THE DEPT. HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS REPORTS TO THE EFFECT THAT COMMERCIAL VESSELS ARE TURNING A BLIND EYE TO BOATS IN DISTRESS ON THE HIGH SEAS BECAUSE THEY HAVE WELL-FOUNDED DOUBTS THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ENTER PORTS, DEBARK THE REFUGEES, AND CONTINUE ON THEIR BUSINESS. ONE SHIP HAS CARRIED 31 REFUGEES FOR WEEKS IN AN ODYSSEY FROM SINGAPORE TO YEMEN AND NOW BACK ON ROUTE TO JAPAN, THANKS TO THE UNRECEPTIVENESS IT HAS ENCOUNTERED. ANOTHER, ARRIVING IN SAUDI-ARABIA WITH 19 REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN ON BOARD FOR NEARLY THREE WEEKS, SEEMS LIKELY TO BE REFUSED PERMISSION BY SAUDI ARABIA TO LAND THEM, AND SO WILL BE FORCED TO CONTINUE ON TO ANOTHER PORT WITH ITS PASSENGERS. THAT THERE WAS A COST IN MONEY AND TIME TO THE SHIPPING FIRMS WHEN THEIR MASTERS HAVE MET THEIR OBLIGATION AT SEA IS OF COURSE REGRETTABLE; BUT OBVIOUSLY A GREATER COST IN HUMAN LIVES IS BEING PAID WHEN THEY DO NOT. WE BELIEVE THAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED AND WILL HAPPEN WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY AS THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE.

6. IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT TO WORSEN, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY TO ASSIST IN THE SOLUTION. THE EXODUS WILL CONTINUE, CERTAINLY, AND THERE MUST BE TEMPORARY REFUGE AND THEN PERMANENT ASYLUM. THE UNHCR'S  
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APPEAL HAS RECEIVED POLITE BUT GENERALLY INADEQUATE RESPONSE, AND MORE ATTENTION MUST THEREFORE BE FOCUSED ON THE MATTER.

7. FOR USUN NEW YORK: THE EFFORT TO SAVE THE LIVES OF THESE BOAT CASE REFUGEES CAN SUCCEED ONLY IF IT IS TRULY INTERNATIONAL. AMBASSADOR THEREFORE SHOULD SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM TO IMPRESS UPON HIM THE GRAVITY OF THE MATTER AND REQUEST HIS PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN ITS SOLUTION. WALDHEIM SHOULD BE ASKED TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE REPS FROM SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA, THAILAND, THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING FIRST ASYLUM FOR REFUGEES, AS SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN HAS REQUESTED THROUGH HIS APPEAL TO THOSE COUNTRIES, SO FAR WITH VERY LIMITED SUCCESS

(SEE CABLES ON "CHOU LONG" BOAT CASE IN INDONESIA, ESPECIALLY JAKARTA 11242 AND 11302). WALDHEIM SHOULD ALSO BE ASKED TO LEND HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT TO THE UNHCR'S REQUEST TO COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING (SEE GENEVA 6892) WITH PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES, SO THAT CREDIBLE ASSURANCES THAT THE

REFUGEES WILL NOT REMAIN IN FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES CAN BE MADE BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THEY CAN BE MOVED ONWARD IN A TIMELY FASHION.

8. SEVERAL CABLES RELATING TO BOAT CASES ARE BEING REPEATED TO YOU, FOR BACKGROUND AND PARTICULARS.

9. ROME FOR SARROS: ROMAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED HERE AND ABROAD IN ASSISTING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES, AND THE HOLY SEE WAS AN ADDRESSEE OF THE UNHCR'S APPEAL ON BOAT CASE REFUGEES. AN EXPRESSION OF PAPAL CONCERN OVER THIS MATTER MIGHT BE BENEFICIAL IN FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY THE PHILIPPINES, SO IT NOT BACK OFF FROM ITS POLICY OF ALLOWING BOATS TO LAND; AND IN TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION COUNTRIES, A MORE GENEROUS RESPONSE TO THE UNHCR APPEAL MIGHT BE EFFECTED WITH PAPAL URGING. THEREFORE AN APPROACH TO THE VATICAN IS BEING DEVELOPED WITH PETER SARROS, NOW CONSULTING IN THE DEPARTMENT. ROBINSON  
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## Message Attributes

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